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Africans, Indians, Arabs, and Scots:
 Jewish and Other Questions in the Age of Empire

Increasingly in the new European order, it is difficult to think of the Jewish diaspora without also thinking of the other European diasporas created by labor migrations, globalization, and ethnic cleansing's refugee transfers. In Germany, Jews are constantly aware of the impact on their own political and social status of the changing status of Turks, Armenians, Roma, Sinti, and Poles. In France, Jews keep a close eye on the success of North African Muslims vying for political and civil rights. In Britain, Jews position themselves ambivalently between the terra firma of the white Christian majority and the shaky territory of marginality shared by Pakistanis, Indians, Africans, and Caribbeans. In attempting to understand the way in which a given European nation—or the EU as a whole—treats its diverse diasporas, scholars hope to comprehend the extents and limits of the rights of the European subject in the post-Cold War era.

Much recent journalism to the contrary, migrations, diasporas, and even globalization are not phenomena originating in the post-colonial, post-industrial, or post-Cold War period:¹ population transfer, at least, was already a prominent feature of the post-Enlightenment, post-French Revolutionary periods of national consolidation and imperial expansion. Yet the approach scholars take to the Jewish Question today seems utterly different than the approach they have taken to the Jewish Question in the nineteenth century. Perhaps because of a perceived moral imperative in the wake of the Shoah to produce a teleological history, scholars have written about the nineteenth-century version of the Question as though it were the central (if not

the single) concern of Europeans' discourse of marginality or as though the Shoah were the retrospective reference point through which to analyze the period.² But the idea of the Jewish Question's centrality would have quite staggered many nineteenth-century Europeans, even those engaged with "semitic" representations of one kind or another. For Jews' status as citizens and subjects was not the only—and was not at all points the most significant—question around which non-Jewish Europeans organized their responses to the increasingly visible minorities in their midst.

Europeans frequently saw the Jewish Question as a subset of a larger set of questions about how Europe's Others might be brought into relation with the emerging nation-states and empires. This larger set of questions included debates about the social and political status of freed slaves, of immigrants from the colonies, of migrants from annexed domestic regions, and of non-conforming religious groups. It included scientists' attempts to demarcate and prioritize all the imagined shades of color they called races. By magnifying the significance of the Jewish Question relative to other questions of Otherness, recent scholarship has done unintended disservice to the study of images of European Jews: by neglecting to study how the discourse of "semitism" functioned as a subset of the discourse of marginality, scholars have hindered our own fledgling efforts to understand how such discourses functioned in writers' attempts to construct national identity.³ Ironically, by neglecting to compare semitism with other discourses of marginality, scholars have missed an opportunity to gain knowledge about semitism. For my contention is that national and marginal identities alike are both relational: their constructed meaning depends in large part on the definitions they gain through juxtaposition.

Taking nineteenth-century England as my test-case, I propose to demonstrate the inalienability of discourses on Africans, Indians, and Arab Muslims from the Anglo-Jewish

Question during the long nineteenth century. I will discuss the interdependent relations between “semitic” representations and, among other things, the debates over the abolition of the slave trade that occurred during the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars and again during the debate over the Second Reform Bill, the debate over Indian Education in the 1830s, and the debates over the pseudoscientific hierarchy of races of the 1840s and 50s. I will examine in some depth the writings of Burke, Carlyle, and Macaulay, and in less depth the writings of Godwin, Scott, Disraeli, Arnold, and Eliot, all of whom wrote comparatively about Jews and at least one other marginalized group. Whether they were liberal, radical, or conservative, these writers used semitic representations in their polemics and literary texts as part of a larger project: the project of disciplining the conceptual borders of the nation-state.

During the revolutionary years of the late eighteenth century, English public figures began to meditate on the extents and limits of the rights to be held by Jews and other marginalized communities within British dominions. In a broader sense, they contemplated how the increasing numbers of aliens on British shores ought to influence the way they conceived of citizenship in the nation and empire. In this endeavor, the Jewish Question was not, to begin with, of very great importance, since Jews had only undertaken a steady trickle of immigration to Britain from the time of the Jew Bill in 1753 and still numbered fewer than 20,000 by the end of the Napoleonic wars.⁴ So unimportant was the Jewish Question that no one had yet made a link between the issue of their rights and the rights of other minority groups. (We might contrast this with the contemporary situation in Germany, in which Lessing’s *Nathan Der Weise* was already meditating in a comparative way on the citizenship of Jews and Muslims).⁵

While Jews were not yet on the English public agenda in a major way, the public was increasingly preoccupied by the treatment of Africans. Although the triangular trade in slaves,

luxury goods, and weapons was 200 years old, public scrutiny of the trade had been relatively quiet until the 1770s and 1780s. The African Company was a well-respected public-private partnership, and the West Indian plantation system at its high point had put as many as 100,000 newly captured African slaves a year to work. The protectionist mercantile economy driven by the slave system had worked efficiently from the African coasts without a perceived need to extend trade into or gain knowledge of or control over the interior of Africa. But by the 1770s in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the mercantile system had begun to break down. Protectionism began to give way to free trade under pressure from manufacturers looking for unfettered access to new markets. Traders saw the interior of Africa as a potential gold mine of new markets. The movement of Europeans into the interior led to the demand that the heathen be civilized, and the missionary project picked up support.⁶

Thus, by the late eighteenth century, the African Company was coming under increased public scrutiny, and the slave trade was becoming the object of increased public discourse. Abolitionism, never before a strong strain in British thought, now found its supporters, particularly amongst Whigs and evangelical Dissenters (and under Wilberforce the movement would achieve the trade's abolition in 1807). Even Tories who did not support abolition on moral grounds began to see the trade's usefulness wane as the old mercantilist economic system began to be supplanted by the new free trade economy.⁷ A number of these Tories began to attempt to regulate the trade so as to ameliorate the brutal treatment of slaves.

A representative of this Tory position was the founder of political conservatism Edmund Burke. Burke wrote a number of proposals and speeches on the treatment of Africans, especially his "Sketch of a Negro Code" from 1780. He also wrote glancingly about Jewishness in his Reflections on the Revolution in France from 1790. A comparison of the Negro Code to his

Reflections illuminates the differences in the ways African and Jews could be understood at this period.

Although Burke was among those who opposed abolition, he was not blind to the slaves' suffering: he himself referred to the trade as "inhuman traffick."⁸ But as the Member for Bristol, whose constituents included some of the nation's wealthiest slavetraders, Burke believed he was not in the position to turn his moral revulsion into an abolitionist stance.⁹ Moreover, although he was in favor in certain instances of the right to revolt against oppression—he famously supported the American colonists' right to rebel against the Crown—he positively denied that African slaves had the same right. In 1778, in the wake of Lord Dunsmore's attempt to incite a slave insurrection in Virginia and Maryland on behalf of the colonists, Burke denied what he called "a crew of fierce, foreign barbarians and slaves" the right "to judge which of their masters were in rebellion" on the ground of "the utter impossibility of containing them and keeping them in order."¹⁰ He went on to claim that the slave barbarians desired only to make themselves "masters of the houses, goods, wives and daughters of their murdered lords."¹¹ Apparently for Burke the right to rebel against one's oppressors, even against an "inhuman traffick," was not a fundamental human right, but a right dependent on one's level of civilization.

Nevertheless, two years later Burke was still so bothered by the brutal treatment of slaves that he circulated his "Sketch of a Negro Code" in which he proposed to regulate the trade. The Code's goals were twofold: "to provide against the manifold Abuses to which a Trade of that nature is liable;" and to "civiliz[e the Natives], and enabl[e] them to enrich themselves by means more desirable" than slavetrading.¹² The proposed Code includes prohibitions on the sale of any person who can read, or of anyone over 35, or of pregnant women.¹³ It prohibits forcing pregnant women to engage in fieldwork, prohibits "unlawful communication" between European

officers and women slaves, recognizes slave marriages, and prohibits splitting up families.¹⁴ It establishes schools and ministers for slaves, and calls for planters to provide each slave with “a good and substantial Hut.”¹⁵ It limits to 13 the number of blows or stripes an overseer could mete out without the permission of a justice of the peace, and it directs that slaves “are to be led by all due means into respect for our holy Religion.”¹⁶ Clearly for Burke the slave trade’s brutality was a stain on England’s civility. While Burke did not support a barbarian’s right to revolt against oppression, he believed that a civilized nation ought not to act in a barbaric fashion. He worked to make oppression itself a more civil, and civilizing, undertaking.

What’s perhaps most important for us about Burke’s Negro Code is its level of detail. He understood the slave trade in all its dimensions and undertook to enact positive, concrete, enforceable laws to ameliorate it. We might profitably contrast his thick description of the trade in the Negro Code with his thin depiction of Jewishness in his Reflections on the Revolution in France.¹⁷ In the Reflections, Burke enacts no Jewish Code to ameliorate Jewish suffering. He does not consider the oppressions endured by Jews, does not meditate on how Jews’ historical suffering reflects on European civility. No actual Jews appear in the text. Rather, in the Reflections, Burke uses Jewishness as a metonymy, a rhetorical figure for Jacobinism, as we will see in more detail in a moment.¹⁸ Here it suffices to see that the *figure* of Jewishness, rather than Jews themselves, merits Burke’s close analysis. In contrast, in regard to Africans he expounds upon the details of the actual treatment and behavior of actual slaves, not the rhetorical figure of slavishness.

Burke begins his meditation on the Jewishness of the French radicals rather innocently with his attack on Richard Price, a Non-conformist preacher whose speeches reflected a fervor for French Revolutionary principles. Before too long Burke employs a metonymy to identify all

English radicals with the building in which Price and the radicals met. He calls them “these gentlemen of the Old Jewry.”¹⁹ He refers to their principles as “the spurious revolution principles of the Old Jewry.”²⁰ What makes the revolution, figuratively speaking, Jewish? The revolution strikes Burke as a direct attack on both the Christian and aristocratic characters of the nation. What horrifies him is the possibility that newcomers, such as Jews and the new middle class, might gain power in a nation built on reason and individual merit. In a Christian and aristocratic nation, by contrast, the law of inheritance would prevent the diminution of Church and noble influence. As it is, in France, the nobility has been “disgraced and degraded,” and the next generation of nobles, Burke projects, “will resemble the artificers and clowns, and money-jobbers, usurers, and Jews, who will be always their fellows, sometimes their masters.”²¹ Apparently there can be no greater degradation than a descent into Jewishness.

To avoid a similar degradation of England’s Christian aristocracy, Burke disclaims, as he says, “all communion” with the British radicals.²² His pun on the eucharist implies that he will not work with those Dissenters fueling British revolutionary zeal, for in his view they are not entirely Christian (and maybe they are even a bit Jewish). He despises those who, as he says, “convert” to the Enlightened ideals of Rousseau and Voltaire.²³ George Gordon, on the other hand, the famous British convert to Judaism, comes in for some of Burke’s most acrid criticism, as if Burke feared Gordon’s choice would become the British fate if the nation were to take a step down the road toward Enlightenment.²⁴ For Burke, Jacobinism is, figuratively speaking, a form of Jewishness.

Burke’s use of abstraction—his rhetorical use of Jewishness as a figure for an ideology promulgated by French Deists and English Dissenters—would become a favorite method throughout the nineteenth century. At various times, Jewishness was abstracted and figuratively

identified with every aspect of the nation from its legal system to its outbreaks of socialism to its stock exchange to its monarchy to its journalism. By 1869, in Culture and Anarchy, Matthew Arnold was able to express this abstraction of Jewishness in an extreme form without any sense of impropriety. He defined “Hebraism” in general as a type of energy, specifically an “energy driving at practice, this paramount sense of the obligation of duty, self-control, and work.”²⁵ Arnold sees Hebraism as one of two rival energies (the other being Hellenism) within the English national character. Which is to say, for Arnold, Hebraism has little to do with Jews. This move to abstraction is one of the hallmarks of nineteenth century representations of Jews, and is here all the more visible in juxtaposition to the “Negro Code.”

In Burke’s discourses of Otherness, then, we see a radical disjunction. The oppression of Africans, (of whom many middle and upperclass Englishmen had second- if not firsthand knowledge), is to be considered carefully and ultimately condoned, but Africans’ suffering is to be ameliorated. Jews, on the other hand, are not yet large, well-organized, visible, or oppressed enough as a group to merit detailed consideration. Their citizenship rights are not yet at issue. Burke’s position on the relative differences in the treatment of Jews and Africans was not to stand, however. During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, as the Jewish population grew through natural increase and trickling immigration (to 20,000 persons by 1815, 60,000 by 1850), as the Board of Deputies began to agitate for Jewish emancipation, and as the Anglo-Jewish subculture began to produce novels, polemics, histories, and other texts in the public sphere, the quality of the comparisons between Africans and Jews would change considerably.

It was the firebreathing essayist and social critic Thomas Carlyle who articulated a coherent basis by which Tories might approach England’s relations with both its Jewish and African Others. A comparison of his anonymous 1853 pamphlet “The Jew Our Lawgiver” with

“Shooting Niagara,” his infamous 1867 essay on the question of the Second Reform Bill, will demonstrate a number of structural similarities (and some crucial differences) in his approach to Jews and Africans.²⁶ In the pamphlet on Jewish emancipation, Carlyle considers the topical question of whether Jews ought to be permitted to sit in Parliament. (Jews finally gained the right to sit without taking the odious Oath of Abjuration four years after Carlyle’s essay was published in 1857). In the essay he ultimately rejects the right of Jewish subjects to stand for public office on several grounds. He revives the charges of deicide and dual loyalty and accuses Jews of attempting to undermine the Christian basis of the state. Worse (in his view), permitting Jews to sit in Parliament will be yet another step in the path to total enfranchisement of all British subjects, a horrific result of adhering too closely to what he calls “infidel liberalism.” He believes the result of increasing the numbers of eligible participants in the national government would be unChristian chaos.

By 1867 when he contemplated the popular support for the Second Reform Bill that aimed to extend the franchise, he had resigned himself to the success of “infidel liberalism.” Nonetheless he looked on liberalism as a social experiment that would inevitably take England on a national barrel ride down Niagara Falls to crushing oblivion. As he puts it at the start of the essay: “Democracy to complete itself; to go the full length of its course, towards the Bottomless or into it, no power now extant to prevent it or even considerably retard it—till we have seen where it will lead us to, and whether there will then be any return possible, or none.”²⁷ As a last-ditch effort to avert the catastrophe of liberal Reform, he asks his readers to contemplate the outcome of the American Civil War and particularly what he calls “the Settlement of the Nigger Question.”²⁸ How Americans have dealt with diversity in general and Africans in particular is, for him, a test of how far liberal Reform may fare in England. In his own mind he is quite sure

how far Africans are suited to play a role in national governance. As he says, “One always rather likes the Nigger; evidently a poor blockhead with good dispositions, with affections, attachments,--with a turn for Nigger melodies and the like:--he is the only Savage of all the colored races that doesn’t die out on sight of the White Man.” But Carlyle insists that “the Almighty Maker has appointed [the Nigger] to be a Servant.”²⁹ Given the existence of humans within the British dominions who are naturally—divinely—appointed to be servants, Carlyle finds it “inexpressibly delirious” that the Public should desire democratic reforms. He describes reform as “the calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, by way of amending the woes we have had from our previous supplies of that bad article.”³⁰

We see then that the existence of both Jews and Africans inspired Carlyle to examine the issue of democratic Reform and in both cases to place limits on the extension of citizenship-rights. Unlike Burke he understands both groups as metonyms for liberalism, but also understands both (not just Africans) as problems in their own right that had to be resolved. We also see that for him these Others are not completely commensurate. Carlyle denies Jews the full rights of citizenship on the basis of their threat to the Christian character of the state; in contrast, he denies Africans’ citizenship on the basis of their congenital blockheadedness, or in other words their race, understood as a divine inheritance. He distinguishes between religious and racial Otherness, although his overweening resistance to liberalism informs his approach to both types of marginalization.

The similarities in the treatment of otherness are still greater when the comparison is not between Jews and Africans, but between Jews and Indians—at least as long as Indians were considered only in regard to their religious difference. Perhaps because of the indelibility of

race, religious and racial minorities seemed to have less in common than did two religious minorities. The figure who best illustrates this point is the Whig historian and MP Thomas Babington Macaulay, known both for his speech on “Jewish Civil Disabilities” (1831) and for his “Minute on Indian Education” (1835).³¹ In these two speeches, Macaulay self-consciously laid out a liberal paradigm for how the British empire ought to deal with religious differences at home and abroad.³² Presented during the debate on the first of Robert Grant’s Bills for Jewish Emancipation, Macaulay’s speech on Jewish disabilities self-consciously placed the issue of Jews’ emancipation in a series of comparative contexts. In the context of religious difference, he compares Jews to Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, Catholics, and Huguenots.³³ Mimicking the voice of an MP resistant to including Jews in the polity, Macaulay says, “But where are we to stop, if once you admit into the House of Commons people who deny the authority of the Gospels? Will you let in a Mussulman? Will you let in a Parsee? Will you let in a Hindoo who worships a lump of stone with seven heads?”³⁴ In his own voice he responds to the resisting “honourable friend” as follows: “I will answer my honourable friend’s question by another. Where does he mean to stop? Is he ready to roast unbelievers at slow fires?”³⁵ A liberal nation ought not be a brutal one, but rather should learn to tolerate religious differences. In fact, liberal nations have already learned this lesson with other groups, as he reminds the House when he asks, “Why not try what effect would be produced on the Jews by that tolerant policy which has made the English Roman Catholic a good Englishman and the French Calvinist a good Frenchman?”³⁶

Nor does Macaulay admit a distinction between an otherness based on religious belief and one based on divinely appointed race. He several times compares Jews to African slaves, saying in one instance, “We treat [Jews] as slaves, and wonder that they do not regard us as brethren.”³⁷ This would seem to suggest that toleration might be applied to Africans as well.

True, he maintains a distinction between the civilized and the savage, but he reminds his audience that “in the infancy of civilisation, when our island was as savage as New Guinea, this contemned people [the Jews] had their fenced cities and cedar palaces, their splendid Temple, their fleets of merchant ships, their schools of sacred learning.”³⁸ That is, he shows how the opposition between civilization and savagery might easily be reversed. It’s the British who have the history of savagery—and in the fashion of good Whig history these savages have been able to develop and progress. As for the Jews, there is “nothing in their national character which unfits them for the highest duties of civilisation.”³⁹ They, too, might participate in the Whig paradigm of progress and development. Although he does not make the argument, it’s hard to see why the same might not be said of African slaves.

Thus the liberal politician articulates a standard of toleration for religious and racial others when it comes to the rights of citizenship in the nation. We should not imagine, however, that toleration means full participation in the nation. Although Macaulay says, “Let us do justice to them,” he does not suggest that they should or will have the same status as us. Doing justice does not mean dissolving the Christian power structure. Christianity will indeed triumph, but through toleration rather than bigotry, just as it has already “triumphed over the superstitions of the most refined and of the most savage nations.”⁴⁰ Macaulay adopts the classical stance of English philo-semitism: we’ll convert Jews to Englishness (and Christianity) better if instead of brutalizing them we show them how tolerant we can be.⁴¹

It is remarkable to see how minutely this programme of anglicization and philo-semitic conversionism are transferred to the programme Macaulay set forth in his Minute on Indian Education four years later. As President of the Committee on Public Instruction in India, he is asked to comment on whether he thinks the Indian school curriculum should focus on traditional

Arabic and Sanskrit texts or on English texts. In casting his vote for English, he employs the same rhetoric of tolerant anglicization that he had employed in the speech on Jewish civil disabilities. Just as he believed Jews would benefit by exposure to Christianity in a tolerant context, he believed that Indians would benefit by exposure to English history, philosophy, religion, and literature in their schools. For Macaulay (who admits to having no fluency in any of the languages of India,⁴² it is a given that “the dialects commonly spoken among the natives contain neither literary nor scientific information.”⁴³ He is also certain that “a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.”⁴⁴ Yet if these lines sounds like nothing more than the arrogant self-justifications of a hegemon, we should consider that by 1835 the East India Company was beginning to be nationalized and to become an official arm of the British Government. The Empire was beginning to be formalized. In the Company’s employ were hundreds of thousands of Indian sepoys, whose chance of upward mobility would depend on their capacity to mimic their English higher-ups in learning, fashions, and religion.⁴⁵ Macaulay’s programme was designed to help these functionaries attain a measure of success within the imperial system. In both his “Minute” and his speech on Jewish disabilities, Macaulay tried to ameliorate the marginalized group’s suffering while ensuring the maintenance of English Christian power.

If there is a difference in Macaulay’s programmes for Jews and Indians, it is that Jews (perhaps because of their small unthreatening population or their European acculturation) are not conceived to be as great a threat to the power structure as Indians. Macaulay even complains against the existence of a political glass ceiling for Jewish citizens, lamenting that “The Jew may be a juryman, but not a judge.... He may rule the money-market but he must not be a Privy Councillor.”⁴⁶ Indian schoolchildren, on the other hand, might learn all of Locke and Milton and

Newton, but until Independence they would never rise above secondary administrators, and they were not meant to. The realization on the part of anglicized Indians that their glass ceiling was intended to be permanent helped fuel the Mutiny of 1857.⁴⁷

But although English Christians considered Jews to have similarities both to racial and colonial others, the marginalized groups considered most similar to Jews during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century wavered among Catholics, Irish, Scots, or Arab Muslims. What is crucial to note is that between comparisons there are two kinds of shifts in meaning: the meaning of both Englishness and Jewishness alters depending on which group Jews are compared to. These comparisons thus demonstrate the non-existence of national and marginal “characters” or “essences.” Rather, national and marginal identities develop relationally.

Catholics and Jews both sought emancipation from civil disabilities beginning in the 1820s and 1830s. Indeed the passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829 directly inspired two Jews, Isaac and Frances Goldsmid, to petition Parliament for Jewish relief the following year.⁴⁸ A comparative study of the Emancipation Bills and the rhetoric surrounding them might yield important conclusions about the parameters of English national identity with regard to religion. In this comparison, Jewishness as a religious identity is paramount.

In the comparison between Jews and Scots, the diasporic aspect of Jewishness is brought to the fore. During the Regency period, Walter Scott made a comparison between Jews’ diaspora and the Scots’ lack of regional autonomy. In the Waverley novels, Walter Scott contemplates the past and future of Scottish regional identity in the wake of the 1707 Act of Union with England. That he ends the series with a Jewish historical romance in Ivanhoe would seem to imply a parallel between Scots and Jews, between regional and diasporic identity—a parallel based, perhaps, on both groups’ dispossession of territory and sovereignty. Rebecca of Ivanhoe is

essentially the Flora MacIvor of the Jews. When in Waverley Flora sings in her hidden bower of the Scots' former national glory and their current dispossession of territory and sovereignty, she becomes what the narrator calls the Scots' "Celtic muse."⁴⁹ Her song contains the essence of the Scottish "national character."⁵⁰ Scott borrows the idea of national essences or characters from Herder, the German philosopher of romantic nationalism. So, too, in Ivanhoe, Rebecca functions as the essence of the Jewish national character, long since separated from its former national glory.⁵¹ Although Victorian Jewish writers like Grace Aguilar had their difficulties with Scott, Aguilar nonetheless absorbed his lesson of the parallel between regional and diasporic identity. She herself even wrote, not only a Jewish historical romance patterned after Ivanhoe, but also a Scottish historical romance, The Days of Bruce (1852).⁵² In the comparison between Jews and a regional Other, the aspect of Jews' identity that emphasized their statelessness became paramount.

When comparing Jews and Arabs, what became paramount was the two groups' common history of wandering, their supposed oriental natures, and increasingly, the pseudoscientific "evidence" of their shared racial inheritance. Early in the nineteenth century, Jews and Arab Muslims were both seen as romantic, nomadic, oriental peoples.⁵³ Cain, Byron's brooding wandering Jew, holds an equivalent place in Byron's world view to the Giaour, Byron's brooding wandering Muslim.⁵⁴ Like gypsies, both Jews and Muslims partook of the spirit of wandering, (although the myth of the "wandering Jew" did have its own separate history and significance). By the 1840s, the young Disraeli had absorbed Byron's romanticization of Jewishness and turned it in a nationalistic and racist direction, both in his early historical romance Alroy and in the later novel Tancred. But in the latter he also claims that an Arab is "but a Jew on horseback."⁵⁵ Here he gives voice to an understanding of semitism as a racial

inheritance shared by Jews and Arabs. George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* most self-consciously invokes the nomadic and oriental when she has her hero wander off to found a Jewish nation in the East.⁵⁶

She also accepts, at least in part, a racial explanation of semitic inheritance. He does not need to convert once he has discovered the biological truth of his inherited Jewishness. This racial understanding perhaps explains the most perplexing feature of the text, Daniel's and Mirah's self-exile to the East. While in correspondence Eliot explained that she deliberately set out to use her final novel to raise the level of liberal toleration of Jews, the novel itself seems to suggest quite a different conclusion—namely, that Jews ought to leave England to set up their own nation-state rather than remaining as English citizens. In this, Eliot copied the ending of her friend Harriet Beecher Stowe's sentimental blockbuster, Uncle Tom's Cabin, which she much admired. There, the archetypal liberated blacks set out to found their own colony in Canada. Thus Eliot borrows a plot element to express a racial understanding of Jewishness—an excellent example of how representations of the Other could cross-fertilize one another. So in an unexpected way, a novel by a tolerant writer that set out to question the racial divisions of English society ends up reconfirming those divisions.

From this brief survey, we can see that the term "Jewish" was available for a variety of readings due to Jews' category indeterminacy—their capacity to be understood in diasporic, religious, national, racial, or ethnic terms. One important means of determining which category is being invoked at any given time is to ask which group Jews were being compared to and for which ideological purposes. By using a comparative lens, we can inquire in a sophisticated way how Jews were used in the larger discursive endeavor of shaping the identity of the English nation and the British empire. Better still, if we assume with Benedict Anderson that national

identity itself is never a fixed quantity, but is rather a never-realized, ever-shifting set of imaginary blueprints, then perhaps we can ask how each instance of Jewishness functions to help a particular writer articulate a particular national blueprint at a particular moment.⁵⁷

Yet even if this method succeeds in recontextualizing semitic discourse, it will still be insufficient to account for the complex interplay of images of Jews in nineteenth century England. For it is limited to the claim that what gives representations of Otherness their significance is only what they tell us about the anxieties of those among whom the Others lived. An approach using this kind of conceptual framework cannot generate a comprehensive knowledge of either nationalism or marginalized identities, including Jewish identity.

To fill in the picture new research might compare the ways in which Jews and other marginalized subjects of the British Empire wrote back in relation to the images of them produced by others. Against the images produced by English Christian writers scholars might juxtapose the products of marginalized subjectivity—Olaudah Equiano's slave narrative from 1789, Hasan Shah's autobiographical novel of Indian life The Dancing Girl from 1790, Grace Aguilar's History of the Jews of England from 1847, for example—in order better to conceive of the imagined nation as a dialectical series of encounters between major and minor writers.⁵⁸ We might try to find out to what extent Jews identified their own Otherness with the regional, colonial, diasporic, racial, or religious differences of the multiple aliens living in the British dominions; or conversely, to what extent Jews identified with themselves with the aims of empire. We might ask to what extent Jews attempted to form intergroup alliances (e.g. with non-Conformists also seeking political emancipation); or to what extent they shunned such alliances. Literary critics and historians might work on elucidating how Jews grappled with genres and ideas they inherited from mainstream culture or from other marginalized communities, and to

what degree Jews were able to alter what they had assimilated in order to create new hybridized forms. Finally, by employing a relational methodology, scholars might continue the task of nudging the discussion of images of Jews in nineteenth-century Europe out of its splendid, teleological isolation and back into history.

¹ See for example Barbara Crossette, "Europe Stares at a Future Built by Immigrants," New York Times, 2 Jan. 2000, sec. 4, p. 1.

² For a critique of modern Jewish history's teleological orientation, see Michael Andre Bernstein, Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For an instance, see Peter T. Park, "Thomas Carlyle and the Jews," Journal of European Studies xx (1990): 1-21.

³ For the idea that representations of Jews are tools in producing national identity, see Michael Ragussis, Figures of Conversions: "The Jewish Question" and English National Identity (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). For a similar argument vis a vis Scots and Irish, see Katie Trumpener, Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁴ See V. D. Lipman, Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950 (London: Watts, 1954).

⁵ See Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Nathan the Wise, trans. Bayard Quincy Morgan, (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1988).

⁶ See Woodruff D. Smith, European Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982), 34-37.

⁷ Smith, ch. 2.

⁸ See Edmund Burke, The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, vol. 3, eds. W. M. Eofson and John A. Woods, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 340.

⁹ Ibid., 563.

¹⁰ Ibid., 359.

¹¹ Ibid., 359.

¹² Ibid., 565.

¹³ Ibid., 568.

¹⁴ Ibid., 571-578.

¹⁵ Ibid., 576, 579.

¹⁶ Ibid., 580, 567.

¹⁷ For the anthropological distinction between thick and thin description, see Clifford Geertz, Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 2000), introduction.

¹⁸ My argument about Burke's Reflections draws on Ragussis, 119-125.

¹⁹ Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. Thomas H. D. Mahoney (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), 18.

²⁰ Ibid., 19.

²¹ Ibid., 55.

²² Ibid., 96.

²³ Ibid., 97.

²⁴ Ibid., 95.

²⁵ Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 129.

²⁶ See Thomas Carlyle, “The Jew Our Lawgiver” (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853) and “Shooting Niagara: And After?” (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867).

²⁷ Carlyle, “Shooting Niagara,” 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

³¹ See Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Civil Disabilities of the Jews,” Edinburgh Review 52 (Jan. 1831): 40-60; and “Minute on Indian Education” in G. M. Young, ed., Macaulay: Prose and Poetry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

³² For an excellent cross-reading of the two speeches, see Gauri Viswanathan, Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5-8.

³³ Macaulay, “Civil Disabilities,” 44, 50, 55-56.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴¹ On English philo-Semitism, see David, Katz, Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Todd Endelman, Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656-1945 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and

Michael Galchinsky, The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996).

⁴² Macaulay, "Minute," 722.

⁴³ Ibid., 721.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 722.

⁴⁵ See Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Men: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," October 28: 125-133.

⁴⁶ Macaulay, "Civil Disabilities," 47.

⁴⁷ See Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), ch. 7.

⁴⁸ On the Emancipation debates see David Feldman, Englishmen and Jews : Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914 (Hartford, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁴⁹ Walter Scott, Waverley, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 106.

⁵⁰ See Trumpener, ch. 3.

⁵¹ See Walter Scott, Ivanhoe (New York: NAL Penguin, 1983), esp. ch. 29.

⁵² See Grace Aguilar, The Days of Bruce (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903).

⁵³ Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 102.

⁵⁴ See George Gordon, Lord Byron, Byron, ed. Jerome J. McGann (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 207-246, 881-938.

⁵⁵ Qtd. in Said, 102.

⁵⁶ George Eliot, Daniel Deronda (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁵⁷ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, revised ed., (New York: Verso, 1991), introduction.

⁵⁸ See Olaudah Equiano, Equiano's Travels, ed. Paul Edwards (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1967); Hasan Shah, The Dancing Girl, trans. Qurratulain Hyder (New York: New Directions Books, 1993); Grace Aguilar, "History of the Jews in England." Chambers's Miscellany 18 (Edinburgh, 1847): 1-32.

